

REMARKS

The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-20 are currently being prosecuted. Claims 1, 2, 10, 11, 19, and 20 are amended. Claim 1 is independent. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the amendments and remarks set forth herein.

Reasons for Entry of Amendments

At the outset, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered into the Official File in view of the fact that the amendments to the claims automatically place the application in condition for allowance.

In the alternative, if the Examiner does not agree that this application is in condition for allowance, it is respectfully requested that this Amendment be entered for the purpose of appeal. This Amendment was not presented at an earlier date in view of the fact that Applicants did not fully appreciate the Examiner's position until the Final Office Action was reviewed.

Drawings

The Official Draftsperson has not approved the formal drawings submitted by the Applicant. It is respectfully submitted that the drawings comply with the requirements of the USPTO. If the Official Draftsperson has any objections to the formal drawings, s/he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned as soon as possible so that the appropriate action may be taken.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §103(a)

Claims 1-4, 7-11, and 19-20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen et al., WO 96/20121, in view of Keip (U.S. 5,921,739). Claims 5 and 12-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen et al. in view of Kiep, and in further view of Anderson (U.S. 5,492,067) and Suzuki et al. (U.S. 4,702,008). Claims 6, 15-17, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Korhonen et al. in view of Kiep, and in further view of Curran (U.S. 4,976,336).

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Independent claim 1 of the present invention is amended to include a novel combination of elements not taught or suggested by any of the prior art cited by the Examiner. Specifically, the present invention as set forth in claim 1, as amended herein, is directed to an apparatus for handling stacked units of boards having a combination of elements including lift units each having a load support member which is rotatably mounted on pivot shafts, and further including actuators mounted on the lift units for enabling the load support members of the lift units to rotate about the pivot shafts between a transfer position and a home position.

The Examiner will note that the above combination of elements is fully supported by, e.g., on page 6, lines 4-12 of the specification, which disclose actuators for moving the support member (of the lift unit) is pivotably rotatable about pivots shafts at least between the transfer position and the home position. See also Figs. 2 and 3, for example, which

shows 39 shafts 39, 40, support member 31, and actuators 37, 38 mounted on the lift units 23, 24.

By contrast, as the Examiner concedes, Korhonen et al. fail to teach lift units which are pivotable, and Keip merely discloses cams 57 which pivot when coming into contact with cam engagement rollers 61 which are positioned on adjustable support arms 62 extending from respective support posts 63. (See Keip column 3, lines 17-22, and Keip Fig. 2). As can be seen, rollers 61 are not mounted on any part of the Keip that could be considered a lift unit. Thus, in contrast to the presently claimed invention, Keip fails to teach actuators mounted on the lift units below the pivot shafts.

Thus, no combination of Korhonen et al. and Keip teaches or suggests the combination of elements set forth in independent claim 1, as amended herein.

Furthermore, none of the other references cited by the Examiner discloses the combination of elements contained in claim 1 of the present invention.

In addition, the Examiner will note that claims 2, 10, 11, 19, and 20 are amended merely to place them in better form.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 is in condition for allowance. Regarding claims 2-20, which stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), these claims are also allowable due to their dependence on allowable claim 1, as well as for the additional limitations contained therein. Accordingly, all claims of the present application should be deemed allowable, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections under U.S.C. §103(a) are respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims are respectfully requested.

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject claims, but merely to show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

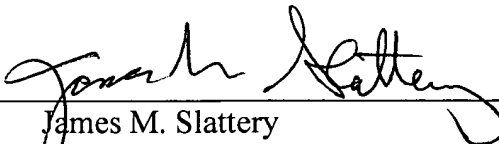
All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and that the present application is in condition for allowance.

If the Examiner believes, for any reason, that personal communication will expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to telephone Carl T. Thomsen (Reg. No. 50,786) at (703) 205-8000.

Pursuant to the provisions of 37 CFR §§1.17 and 1.136(a), Applicant respectfully petitions for a one (1) month extension of time for filing a response in connection with the present application. The required fee of \$110.00 is attached hereto.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.17, particularly extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,
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